

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 08025 01 OF 02 221417Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08  
EA-10 FRB-03 INR-10 IO-13 NEA-11 NSAE-00 ICA-11  
OPIC-03 SP-02 TRSE-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 AGRE-00  
OMB-01 SS-15 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSC-05  
PA-01 /126 W

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R 221404Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6349  
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS  
AMCONSUL BELFAST  
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 08025

USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

USOECD

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT PDEV UK EEC  
SUBJECT: DIRECT ELECTIONS: EURO-CONSTITUENCIES FOR  
ENGLAND AND WALES

REF: LONDON 1537

SUMMARY. THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION MAY 21 PUBLISHED ITS  
FIRST DETAILS OF THE 70 CONSTITUENCIES FROM WHICH  
DELEGATES TO THE EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY WILL BE ELECTED IN  
ENGLAND AND WALES (THE REMAINING 11 UK EURO-CONSTITU-  
ENCIES ARE IN SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND (NI) AND  
WILL BE PUBLISHED SEPARATELY). INITIAL COMPUTER PROJEC-  
TIONS BASED ON THE OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTIONS  
RESULTS INDICATE LABOR WOULD WIN 36 SEATS AND THE  
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PAGE 02 LONDON 08025 01 OF 02 221417Z

CONSERVATIVES 34. THE LIBERALS, AS EXPECTED, WOULD BE  
SHUT OUT. WHEN THE NOTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES IN SCOTLAND  
AND NI ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, THE PROJECTED BALANCE  
IS: LABOR, 42 SEATS; CONSERVATIVES, 35 SEATS; SCOTTISH  
NATIONAL PARTY (SNP), ONE SEAT; ULSTER UNIONISTS, TWO  
SEATS; AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOR PARTY, ONE  
SEAT. THESE DATA, HOWEVER, SHOULD BE TREATED WITH

CIRCUMSPECTION, SINCE THEY ARE BASED ON AN ASSUMED  
GENERAL ELECTION-LEVEL TURNOUT: MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE  
THE EC DIRECT ELECTIONS TURNOUT WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY  
BELOW THE GENERAL ELECTION LEVEL. THE TORIES NORMALLY  
BENEFIT FROM THE LOWER TURNOUT. THE ANTICIPATED DECLINE  
IN LIBERAL SUPPORT TOO WOULD HELP THE CONSERVATIVES.  
END SUMMARY.

1. THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES MAY 21  
PUBLISHED ITS TENTATIVE DECISIONS ON THE 70 CONSTITU-  
ENCIES FOR THE EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. THESE  
CONSTITUENCIES ENCOMPASS 516,000 VOTERS, PLUS OR MINUS  
10 PERCENT, AND DESCRIBE A RECOGNIZABLE COMMUNITY.  
APPEALS ON THESE TENTATIVE BOUNDARIES WILL BE HEARD,  
AND A NUMBER OF MINOR ADJUSTMENTS CAN BE EXPECTED TO  
RESULT. DETAILS ON THE EURO-CONSTITUENCIES FOR SCOTLAND  
WILL BE PUBLISHED LATER -- A PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION  
SYSTEM WILL BE USED FOR THE THREE NI SEATS BECAUSE OF  
THAT REGION'S UNIQUE SECTARIAN DIVISIONS. FURTHER  
DETAILS ON THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION'S INITIAL WORK WILL  
BE FORWARDED TO THE DEPARTMENT BY AIRGRAM.

2. NUFFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD, HAS RUN A SERIES OF  
COMPUTER PROJECTIONS OF HYPOTHETICAL DIRECT ELECTION  
RESULTS IN THESE 70 CONSTITUENCIES, BASED ON THE  
OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS. ACCORDING TO  
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PAGE 03 LONDON 08025 01 OF 02 221417Z

THESE PROJECTIONS, THERE WOULD BE 25 "MARGINAL" SEATS  
-- VIZ. VULNERABLE TO THE OTHER PARTY WITH A SWING OF  
5 PERCENT OR LESS -- 15 TORY AND 10 LABOR. THE FOLLOW-  
ING TABLE SUMMARIZES THE NUFFIELD PROJECTIONS:

SEATS WON  
CONS. LABOR

10 PERCENT CONS. SWING	58	12
5 PERCENT CONS. SWING	44	26
CURRENT OPINION POLL STANDINGS	38	32
1974 ELECTION RESULTS	34	36
5 PERCENT LABOR SWING	19	51
10 PERCENT LABOR SWING	6	64

3. WHILE THE EURO-CONSTITUENCIES HAVE YET TO BE  
DEFINED FOR SCOTLAND, VARIOUS NOTIONAL ALTERNATIVES ALL  
PRODUCE AN OVERWHELMING LABOR MAJORITY, A 6/1/1 SPLIT  
BETWEEN LABOR THE TORIES AND THE SNP BEING THE MOST  
LIKELY RESULT, BASED EITHER ON CURRENT POLL DATA OR THE  
1974 GENERAL ELECTION RESULT. IN NI A 2/1 SPLIT BETWEEN  
THE UNIONISTS AND THE SDLP IS ANTICIPATED.

4. COMMENT: FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES (AND BRITAIN'S TRADITIONAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM), THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION'S WORK APPEARS EQUITABLE. THE

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PAGE 01 LONDON 08025 02 OF 02 221418Z  
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COMPLETE SHUT-OUT OF THE LIBERALS, OF COURSE, WAS EXPECTED, GIVEN COMMONS' DECISION TO ADOPT A SIMPLE MAJORITY SYSTEM RATHER THAN PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION. ACCORDING TO DATA PUBLISHED BY THE SUNDAY TIMES, THE LIBERALS WOULD RUN SECOND (AND THEN VERY DISTANT) IN ONLY 6 OF THE 70 EURO-CONSTITUENCIES, ALL OF WHICH ARE "SAFE" CONSERVATIVE SEATS. THE FACT THAT THE LIBERALS HAVE VERY LITTLE CHANCE TO WIN A EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY SEAT COULD ENCOURAGE THEIR SUPPORTERS TO STAY AWAY FROM THE POLLS ON ELECTION DAY.

5. WE WOULD, MOREOVER, ADD SEVERAL CAVEATS TO THE COMPUTER PROJECTIONS. FIRST, THE TENTATIVE BOUNDARIES CAN BE CHANGED, AND SUCH CHANGES COULD AFFECT THE PROJECTED RESULT. SECOND, THEY ARE ALL BASED ON THE 1974 GENERAL ELECTION TURNOUT, AND THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THE EC DIRECT ELECTIONS WILL DRAW THE 75

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PAGE 02 LONDON 08025 02 OF 02 221418Z

PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE EXPECTED IN GENERAL ELECTIONS. MOST OBSERVERS ANTICIPATE THE DIRECT ELECTION TURNOUT WILL BE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THAT OF LOCAL ELECTIONS (OFTEN LESS THAN 50 PERCENT) AND THAT OF A GENERAL ELECTION. IF THAT SHOULD PROVE TO BE THE CASE, THE TORIES WOULD PROBABLY DO SUBSTANTIALLY BETTER THAN THE COMPUTER DATA INDICATES, BECAUSE TORY VOTERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO GO TO THE POLLS THAN LABOR VOTERS. SIMILARLY, THE DECLINE IN LIBERAL SUPPORT NOTED IN RECENT OPINION POLLS, IF EXTENDED TO THE EC ELECTION, WOULD ALSO BENEFIT THE CONSERVATIVES, AS DEFECTING LIBERALS ARE MORE LIKELY TO VOTE CONSERVATIVE THAN LABOR. ANTIPATHY TOWARD THE EC AMONG LABOR VOTERS TOO MIGHT DEPRESS THE POLL, BUT IT MAY ALSO BE ARGUED THAT THIS ANTIPATHY MIGHT MAKE THEM MORE LIKELY TO TURN OUT, ESPECIALLY IF THEIR LABOR CANDIDATE WERE A LESS THAN CONVINCED PRO-MARKETEER. ACCORDINGLY, WE CONCLUDE THAT THE PROJECTIONS TEND TO OVERSTATE LABOR'S LIKELY PERFORMANCE AND UNDERSTATE THAT OF THE CONSERVATIVES.

STREATOR

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